



Liberty and duty, freedom and responsibility. That's the deal”  
--John W. Gardner

Submission to the California Performance Review Commission

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before this Commission to discuss the recommendations of the California Performance Review team on “Expanding Opportunities for Volunteerism.” It is truly historic for the Governor to include in a broad review of the organization of all state government functions an examination of the role of state government in supporting service and volunteerism.

In general I want to commend the Governor and the CPR staff for launching a broad investigation into how state government can be made more effective and efficient. This could be an historic platform from which to launch a thoroughgoing re-examination of the role and functions of state government, and policies and programs from top to bottom. Though the CPR staff has produced a very wide range of ideas for reform, some would argue, and I would be among them, that it hasn’t gone far enough. The fundamental question is “What do we expect from *government*, and from *state* government in particular?” ... This should be *followed* by the question “How shall we organize and pay for the functions that state government ought to perform?” The CPR analysis answers the second question without answering the first. I say this not as criticism, but as constructive feedback. Indeed, without CPR we would not be here today raising the more fundamental question: “What do we expect from state government?” In the next few weeks I will submit written testimony raising that question with respect to other recommendations of the CPR report, and with respect to issues not addressed by CPR, such as fiscal reform.

But today I’m very appreciative of the opportunity to apply that analysis to the role of state government in promoting and supporting volunteerism, community service, and civic engagement.

The late John Gardner, a great leader and mentor to many of us in the volunteerism field, once said: “Liberty and duty, freedom and responsibility. That’s the deal.” By virtue of being Americans, and wanting to be virtuous Americans, we gladly bear the responsibility of serving others as part and parcel of enjoying the freedom and opportunities given us. We do this not in some trivial *quid pro quo*, I-give-you-get, you-give-I-get, but it is of a piece: serving each other is *one of the things we mean* when we say “I am an American.” Service to others can take many forms: defending our country...working in a homeless shelter...serving on a nonprofit board...turning out at a public forum on the issues of the day...or registering to vote and voting at every election...these are all ways that we serve each other. But they are all **voluntary** acts. And this willingness to take responsibility for each other is the source of the moral power of these acts and the lifeblood that has given longevity to the American system of governance.

Therefore, in discussing the role of government, specifically state government, in encouraging and supporting volunteerism and service and civic engagement, we must be ever mindful not to treat this government role as simply programmatic or regulatory, as if the voluntary sector is another tool of government in advancing governmental interests. To see what I mean, just think of the difference between the American Girl Scouts and the Soviet Union’s Young Pioneers. Or, as much as we decry the failure of Americans to

register and vote, our system is far preferable to the countries in which 99% of the electorate turns out to vote for single party candidates. It is only if we appreciate that volunteerism, service and civics are rooted in an *independent* sector... the voluntary sector...a sector which must be treated with due respect by the public sector... that the true power of American volunteerism is unleashed.

In this context, I will only address in my formal remarks the recommendation of the CPR team to “Restructure the Governor’s Office of Service and Volunteerism.” I have addressed other recommendations in the summary statement of my submission.

I applaud this recommendation, and indeed, as a member of the GOSERV Commission, I offered the motion to change our name to the California Service Corps after hearing Maria Shriver’s presentation of a compelling and expansive vision for the role of state government in the service and volunteerism field. My criticism of the CPR Team approach is that it didn’t go far enough, and embrace and promote the full flowering of this role for state government, and the fulfillment of a possibility that many of us in the field have only dreamed about over the years.

Specifically, I recommend that state government, and the California Service Corps as the lead agent for state government, promote service, volunteerism and civic engagement in the following five ways:

1. **Promote the *full spectrum* of volunteer, service and civic activities.**

Traditionally, the “volunteerism” field includes:

- part-time volunteering such as is organized by volunteer centers and senior volunteer programs
- full-time stipended community service as in Americorps and the California Conservation Corps
- employment-based volunteer activities, and
- school-based service.

[Note: On this point, I agree with but would go beyond the CPR team recommendation to mandate community service throughout public higher education. Service should be mandated *throughout* our K-through-university public education system. **However**, this mandate should be conditioned on providing high quality professional support in the field and full curricular integration in schools so that service truly will be a positive part of every student’s educational experience. I believe that there is nothing inconsistent in mandating volunteer service by students: we are all learning beings, after all, and

we must learn to serve just as we must learn to read and to draw and to solve mathematical puzzles.]

But in addition to having state government support the now well-accepted modes of service and volunteerism, state government ought to promote civic engagement, among young people and adults. For example, we ask the question, “Why can’t the Governor and Legislature seem to solve the structural deficit in the state budget?” and I would answer that it’s in large part because Californians are uninformed and uninvolved in the issue, and until the voters as “customers” are able to make wise judgments about how to fundamentally reform the way we do budgeting in California, policymakers will not be emboldened to make hard choices. The state government could actively promote civic engagement on this issue, for example, by holding state budget listening sessions all over the state *before* the Governor presents his official state budget. If this were done, it would help make participating Californians better citizens...and state government will respond by being better policymakers. This leads to my second point:

## **2. Don’t segment service and volunteerism only as a program, but promote it *as a strategy, across the state government.***

Every state agency can find creative ways to improve its programs and services by supporting or encouraging complementary volunteer activities. The state parks system and its volunteers and charitable associations are a model for this. On the other hand, for gosh sake, don’t promote volunteerism because it will save money. It could save money, of course, but in most instances it will enhance professional services but it may actually cost more, because of the need to train and supervise volunteers. There are volunteer activities that are only appropriate to volunteers, but a cost-saving approach may tempt agencies to try to replace the work of professionals in state government or contracted organizations, even when it is inappropriate. As a rule, if you’re saving a lot of money through replacing professionals with volunteers, you’re probably just diminishing the quality of service. Just to be provocative, I would also say that this rule means that we must keep the Department of Finance or its successors as far away as possible from promoting volunteerism ...except among their own employees, of course. It’s not that DOF would want to undercut true volunteerism by making cash savings the driving rationale, but it’s just their job. This leads to my third point:

## **3. Give service, volunteerism and civic engagement appropriate leadership status within state government.**

The California Service Corps should be leading the state’s work in promoting service, volunteerism and civic engagement. Service is serious business, and if it is to be seen as a serious strategy by Cabinet Secretaries, for example, the head of the California Service Corps should be at the table -- as a member of the Cabinet.

Should the Governor take this step, by the way, to my knowledge he will be the first in the nation to do so.

#### **4. Promote individual philanthropy, but don't centralize it.**

The CPR team suggests that state government support individual philanthropy and create a single portal for giving associated with state agencies. Promoting giving as a form of service to others is a useful role for the state, but through communications and celebration, not through the one-stop charity box proposed. People give because they care about the cause or organization they are supporting, and if state government is to promote giving associated with state agencies and functions, as does the park service, for example, the process should be as decentralized as possible to enable the donor to see and feel the results of the donation. That is what we know in the nonprofit sector, and what should be understood by state government.

#### **5. Engage with organized philanthropy.**

Though not mentioned by the CPR team, there is an important, indeed historic opportunity for the California Service Corps to engage with the state's magnificent foundations and other organized charities, to explore possible partnerships in serving the people of California. Commissioners Canales, Ibarra, Taylor and Whiteside are very familiar with our state's organized philanthropic sector, as represented by our private, community and family foundations, United Ways and others. But California has never had a focused effort to build working relationships between state agencies and organized philanthropy. Some informal work on this is underway now, and I am hopeful that it will be successful. The California Service Corps should be responsible for leading this effort forward.

But let's be clear: partnerships between state government and organized philanthropy should be entered out of mutual respect, and with a special appreciation for the differing roles of the philanthropic and public sectors. State agencies trying to get foundations to pay for things they can't persuade the Legislature to pay for?...this won't and shouldn't get very far. On the other hand, state agencies can partner with philanthropy to take on tasks that are infeasible for state agencies, such as first-in, high-risk program experiments, or long-term studies of program impact, or bringing nonprofits aboard as full partners with public programs. The possibilities for partnerships will be limited, of course, by resources available and competing priorities. But within that limit there are wonderfully creative possibilities, and the California Service Corps should be the meeting ground for mutual learning and action.

In conclusion, I'd like to quote another great American, Sargent Shriver, our First Lady's father. Shriver, like John Gardner and others of their generation, were the true leaders of

America's modern service movement. "We are optimists," Shriver wrote. "We believe that things can be accomplished; that those who have ideals and are willing to work for them can often attain their ambitions; in short, that the world is not too much with us but by sincere and untiring effort can be made a better place to live in." Sargent Shriver was all of twenty years old when he said that, and he lived his life by it. Something tells me that California can live by that philosophy, too, if we just "have ideals and are willing to work for them."

Thank you very much.